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Approved For Release 2001/03/03 : CIA-RDP78S02149R000200080014-6

25 January 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: McNamara's Statement on Civilian Casualties in North Vietnam

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1. This morning I was called by [REDACTED] and shown a draft of a statement which Secretary McNamara apparently intended to present at his hearings before the Russell Committee today. This paper in essence was the US rationalization of the civilian casualty problem. The statement was based largely on the special memorandum prepared for the President on 15 January.

2. Dick and I were called to the DDI's office this afternoon to give our reaction to the paper. We pointed out that presentation problems apart -- the paper was obviously hastily written and poorly organized -- there were several problems with the paper. It overstated some of the effects of the Rolling Thunder Program and had other faults which make it rather vulnerable. The major fault is that it presents an estimate of "true" casualties which is far too precise and was derived by lifting out of context figures from our 15 January report. The paper contains a gross miscalculation used to derive a fatality rate for true casualties -- 1 per 23 sorties compared to the 1 per 4 sorties if our data had been manipulated correctly. The paper also glosses over the question of casualties in Nam Dinh, particularly, citing only part of the figures announced by the North Vietnamese government. These figures are generally well-known and freely available to the press. Finally we noted that if our estimates of casualties become available to the people who have this briefing paper, the techniques used to minimize the casualty problem will be all too clear to the reader and make the Secretary of ~~State~~ Defense extremely vulnerable to criticism.

3. After noting other minor problems with the paper, the DDI then indicated that he regarded the case as closed -- apparently because the paper has already been given to Senator Russell. The odds seem to be better than even that this paper will be leaked.

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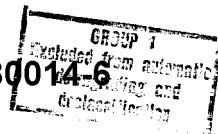
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ORR/D/T: [REDACTED] ldr/5201 (25 Jan 67)

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